

Editor's Note

THERE are two special features in this combined issue of Volume 38. The first theme deals with “A Critical Inheritance of Daisetsu Teitarō Suzuki,” and, to commemorate his passing forty years ago, we attempt to evaluate his significance today, particularly because he was the founder of this journal. The second feature is “Natsume Sōseki and Buddhism.” Sōseki is known as an intellectual and a representative figure of modern Japanese thought in the nineteenth century. He is also famous for his novels, many of which remain popular to this day. Here, we scrutinize the consequences of his seeking a way, which he characterized as spiritual.

Although there have been many assessments of D. T. Suzuki's activities, they have often tended to fall to one of two extremes. The majority of his reviewers seem to have lacked objective and empirical studies on their part, and merely worshiped him as a “great man” who had introduced Zen to the West. However, on the other hand, recent critics have paid attention to his words and deeds during the period of Japan's military aggression, and denounced his social ethics as unsound. Hence, there appears to be a vast divergence in the various evaluations of him.

As *The Eastern Buddhist* itself was founded by D. T. Suzuki, I requested works from experienced scholars in both Japan and the United States, who have studied or been interested in him for a long period of time, that discuss the possibility of retrieving his religious thought in a more holistic sense. We also decided to investigate Suzuki's intellectual activities during his youth, a topic which scholars have neglected in the past. His essays, which appeared in a Buddhist journal, *Shin Bukkyō*, between 1900 and 1915 are quite indispensable in order to understand his early thought. As this collection in *Shin Bukkyō* is extremely extensive, I solicited help from Moriya Tomoe, one of the contributors, to select thirteen of these essays. However, due to the limitations of space in this volume, only one of them could be presented here. The others will be published in future issues of the journal.

I believe that the relevance of the theme of the second feature for those living in Japan today and for the common values transcending national differences lies in its exploration of the ways in which Japanese religious thinkers searched for a spiritual path during a period of rapid modernization. As is well known, Japan was able to become modernized by inheriting the civilization from Western Europe and the United States, a process which continues even today in every corner of the world under the name of globalization. In spite of its glory, however, the darkness of modernization has overshadowed the lives of human beings. Natsume Sōseki, as both a

writer and an intellectual, was one of those seekers who continued to quest for an authentic way of living, while suffering and finding himself caught between the “light and shadow” of modernization. Although recognizing the benefits of modern rationality, he also realized its limitations, and after much experimentation, he came to terms with the Buddhist world-view. In this present volume, we have attempted to reveal part of his struggles involved in this endeavor.

Because D. T. Suzuki and Natsume Sōseki lived in the same period, it is possible to clarify the former’s intellectual activities by contrasting them with the latter’s way of life.

As an aid to understanding the articles featured in “Natsume Sōseki and Buddhism,” I have included a brief summary of Sōseki’s novel, *Meian (Light and Darkness)*. I also asked Ama Michihiro to serve as the special editor of this section.

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Editor
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